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Montana SCHOOLS

November 2000

Newsletter of the Montana
Office of Public Instruction
Nancy Keenan, Superintendent
Vol. 44, No. 1

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And More ...

Please note: Because this document has a statewide focus, the articles use the terms "Native American," "American Indian," and "Indian" interchangeably. Whenever possible, however, the majority of tribal people would prefer to be referred to by their specific tribal name.

Second Class
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Indian Education in Montana

Native Americans and cultures form an important piece of Montana's past, present, and future. With seven reservations, 12 distinct tribal groups, over 8 percent of our state's population, and an article in the State Constitution recognizing "the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians," it would seem that the Native presence in Montana would be hard to ignore. Yet, for many years, American Indian contributions have been largely overlooked, even in our state's schools, including those located next to or near reservations.

This has had unfortunate repercussions for both Indian and non-Indian students. Because their cultural backgrounds receive little consideration — either in classroom content or pedagogical approaches — Indian students often feel alien, unwelcome, and powerless in the classroom. As a result, almost half opt to leave high school before they graduate (see story on page 11). Non-Indian students have no chance to learn about important aspects of Montana's identity, and their continued ignorance means continuation of harmful prejudices and biases (see story on page 6).

Recently, a number of processes have coalesced to create new momentum for Indian Education in Montana. The 1999 Legislature passed HB 528, a law directing schools to comply with the state's constitutional mandate and integrate American Indian History into local curricula. The State Board of Public Education approved a list of recommendations to implement the new law, which was codified as MCA 20-1-501.

Two young Native American students pose after performing at a dance competition.

In addition, the current cycle of educational revision and review — both of academic standards and assessment — offers an important opportunity to recognize Montana's Indian population and their contributions in classrooms around the state (see story on page 8). ■

An imagined educational journey exposes the need for increased Indian Education in Montana's schools

Imagine a Montana fourth grader whose only exposure to American Indians comes at Thanksgiving. She learns that the Indians fed the pilgrims some turkey and makes a paper headband, which she colors and wears around the playground. She does not know the Nation of these Indians, just that they grew potatoes and corn.

Imagine an eighth grader who, when studying Montana history, learns only that Indians resided in Montana before the settlers came. Her lessons do not cover the fact that present-day Montana has seven reservations and twelve distinct tribal groups, each of which has its own story of history. She does not learn how these tribes — which constitute 8 percent of the state's population — still contribute to Montana's society.

Imagine a new high school graduate who knows more about Pocahontas and Sakakawea than any Montana Indians. She has not studied any of the tribal governments, read any literature written by American Indians, nor has she learned how American Indians contributed to the study of math and science. She still carries only stereotypical images of American Indians in her mind as she enters the university system where the promise of academic freedom and the diversity of courses combine to expand her learning opportunities.

Imagine a teacher education student who, as a part of her training, must only take a single, one-credit course in multicultural education. In this class, she takes a tour of the world but spends very little time learning about the Indigenous people of this country. Beyond this class, she learns nothing about Montana's Indian population.

> **"The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity."**
>
> — Montana State Constitution, Article X, Section 1(2)

Now, imagine that college graduate, a newly certified teacher employed by the public school system, facing American Indian students in her classroom. She cannot teach what she doesn't know. But, without adding materials and pedagogy relevant to her Indian students, she may not be successful with them. Also, if she fails to integrate lessons and units about Montana Indians into her classroom curriculum, her non-Indian students will leave her classroom with the same limited understanding of American Indians that she has. She wants to do what's right and decides that she must include some lessons about Montana Indians in her classroom.

Now comes the hard part.

Once this teacher has decided to add American Indian content into her classroom curriculum, she begins to look around for appropriate resources and materials and seemingly hits a wall. She doesn't know where to turn and becomes frustrated.

Because she's unfamiliar with Montana's Indian population, she doesn't realize *that each Montana tribe has a tribal education department, which can provide curricular material and resources. She doesn't know how to evaluate the books she uses in her classroom for cultural authenticity and validity. She doesn't know that there are a multitude of books and Web sites that would help her understand how to integrate American Indian content into her lessons. With existing commitments and everything else she must teach, she has no time to take on a second education to learn about this area she has been denied in her schooling.*

And the cycle continues.

A reflection of reality

Education in Montana should be about the 4 Rs: Reading, 'Riting, 'Rithmetic, and Racial equality.

(Journey, continued on page 4)

Message from Nancy Keenan

I am proud to dedicate this issue of *Montana Schools* to our rich Montana Native American heritage and its place in our schools. I hope these resources, stories, and thought-provoking articles will be a catalyst to your understanding of the significance of Native American people and culture in Montana. All of our students benefit when we can help them understand and appreciate our state's rich cultural and racial diversity.

House Bill 528, passed by the 1999 legislature, articulated the philosophy that the history of Montana and the problems of the state cannot be adequately understood and addressed unless both Indians and non-Indians have an understanding of the history, culture, and contemporary contributions of Montana's Indian people.

The implementation of this philosophy calls us to examine how we are educating all of our students regarding Native American history and tradition - not just the 11 percent of our students who are Native American. Many ideas and resources for including Indian topics into your classrooms and enriching our school environments can be found throughout this issue of Montana Schools and on METNET.

In August, several hundred people gathered in Helena for the first Montana State Conference on Race: Partnering Indians and Non-Indians For Change. Tribal leaders and educators, elected officials, and state agency leaders engaged in a rich two-day dialogue on race issues in Montana. The message throughout the event was clear - talking openly and respectfully across racial boundaries is the most important and the most difficult challenge before us in addressing Montana race issues.

Read the lessons offered in this issue of Montana Schools - the words of educators, philosophers, parents, and practitioners. The experience and advice they offer here is provocative and inspiring. And, most importantly, open your heart and your ears, and try one new approach to expand understanding of Indian heritage in your classroom. I believe it is worth the time, the risk, and the challenge to enrich cultural understanding and learning for all our students.

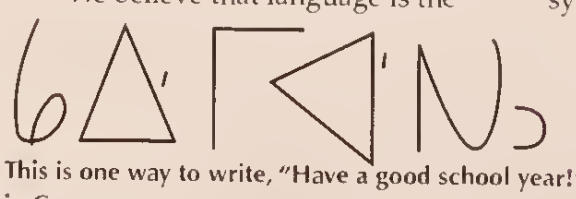
Nancy Keenan

Bilingual education at work in Montana

Bilingual education in Montana is alive and well, reflecting a sustained interest in language in the state. Native languages form part of the curriculum in almost all school districts on the seven reservations. Currently 17 Title VII federally-funded programs are in these local school districts: Box Elder, Brockton, Browning, Dixon, Frazer, Harlem, Heart Butte, Lodge Grass, Missoula, Poplar, Rocky Boy, and St. Ignatius. Title VII of the IASA provides funding on a competitive basis to local school districts for services to limited-English-proficient students. Last spring eligible agencies in Montana submitted eight proposals. Of those, four received funding: Brockton School District, Ft. Belknap Head Start, and two programs in the Missoula County Public Schools serving American Indian, Hmong, and Russian students.

In addition to these projects, Title VII professional development and teaching training programs were awarded to MSU-Billings, MSU–Bozeman, Stone Child College, and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI). Through the OPI teacher training grant, professional development is offered to all native language teachers in the state, including the 102 currently certified Class 7 teachers.

While the design of the language programs in the state is diverse, they reflect the Montana Association of Bilingual Education's philosophy: "We believe that language is the most fundamental factor in education and that learning in and about more than one language results in significant cognitive and affective benefits. Children whose lives are impacted by languages other than English should be provided an educational program that assures them those benefits."



This is one way to write, "Have a good school year!" in Cree.

In the face of the overwhelming presence of English in our society and the prospect of diminishing numbers of fluent speakers, native language educators in Montana demonstrate great dedication to teaching and learning language. ■

Statewide Indian Education Events: *A brief history*

As long as Montana public schools have been educating Indian children, educators, both Indian and non-Indian, have contributed a great deal of insight and expertise toward assuring that these schools meet the needs of Indian students.

Without the leadership of these educators and their actions toward positive changes, there would be neither a history of past efforts nor any forward momentum on which to continue.

1975

In 1975, the *Indian Culture Master Plan* was developed and provided the state a valuable resource that addressed the underachievement of Indian students in the public school system. This document was the first of its kind and became the template of all efforts that followed.

1990

Educators again sought to address concerns about the education of Indian students with the creation of *A Plan for American Indian Education in Montana*. This "State Plan," began with the Montana Forum for Indian Education, which was sponsored by the Montana Advisory Council for Indian Education (MACIE) to gather input from Montana educators and students. The group then held an Indian Education Retreat where they developed strategies to address the issues heard during the forum.

The document created from these efforts outlined specific strategies for the governor, the legislature, Board of Regents, Board of Public Education (BPE), Office of Public Instruction (OPI), and local districts. Although a decade old, it represents an important reference for these entities to "check up" on their progress toward assuring a quality education for Indian students.

Also in 1990, the Montana Committee for American Indian Higher Education (MCAIHE) sponsored the statewide *Opening the Montana Pipeline* Conference. This conference was designed "to develop an action plan that would provide the blueprint to increase American Indians access to, and success in, the higher education system." The research presented at the conference and the recommendations that were outlined subsequent to the conference are still viable resources for higher education officials, institutions, and students.

1997

The 1997 Montana State Legislature passed a bill declaring the third week in September *American Heritage Day* and directing Montana school districts to use that time to teach students about Native American history, culture, and current contributions.

1999

The 1999 Montana State Legislature approved HB 528, which directs Montana's education community to comply with Montana's constitutional commitment to Indian education. In October of 1999, the Montana Indian Education Association (MIEA) and MACIE sponsored a statewide Indian Education Forum. The 1999 MIEA Conference also hosted a follow-up session to this forum. It became apparent that, while there have been many efforts and positive actions taken toward improving the achievement and success of Indian students in Montana's schools, many of the key issues remain unchanged because those efforts were not institutionalized.

A Statewide Indian Parent Forum Indian parents was held in Pablo, Montana. Approximately 200 parents of Indian children gathered to discuss issues and talk with various parent advocacy groups and organizations. They formed the statewide organization *Voices of Indian Communities for Education* (VOICE), giving Indian parents a vehicle to share their concerns and work with school districts.

Governor Racicot created a task force made up of members from the BPE and the Board of Regents. This task force was charged with creating specific strategies for the implementation of HB 528 and Article X of the Montana Constitution (see page 5).

2000

In March, the BPE adopted a set of recommendations for HB 528's implementation (see page 5).

In August, the OPI and the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education submitted their action plans for fulfilling the BPE's recommendations. In early September, the second Statewide Indian Parent Forum was held at the Salish-Kootenai College in Pablo, Montana.

During Summer 2000, Indian educators gathered to develop a curriculum guide that aligns American Indian content to Montana's academic standards and a professional development plan for implementing HB 528. These will soon be complete.

We again wish to acknowledge the many hours and tireless efforts of the educational leaders whose dedicated actions and valuable reports have taught us much. We need to continue to work with and gain knowledge from them to build on their efforts. ■

— Denise Juneau, OPI
Indian Education Specialist

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Information about Native Peoples and Tribal governments

To understand the unique political and legal status that differentiates Indian people from other minority groups, it is neccessary to understand the historical relationship between Indian Tribes and the U.S. government. This relationship is based on three fundamental principles: sovereignty, treaty rights, and trust responsibility.

Tribal sovereignty

Tribal sovereignty is an inherent right derived from international law that gives Tribes the authority and power to govern themselves. The framers of the U.S. Constitution acknowledged tribal sovereignty and, over the decades, the courts and Congress have affirmed it through legal decisions and legislation. Tribal sovereignty empowers Indian Tribes to form governments; determine tribal membership; regulate property; tax; maintain law and order; and regulate domestic relations, commerce, and trade.

Treaties

Treaties formalize the nation-to-nation relationship hetween sovereign entities — Indian Tribes and the U.S. government and Indian Tribes and state governments. While often misperceived as granting special rights, treaties are federal obligations that Tribes secured in return for ceding land to the U.S. government. These federal obligations include protecting and enhancing Indian lands and resources; ensuring the power to self-govern; and providing the economic, social and educational services necessary to raise the standard of living and social well-being of Indian people.

Trust responsibility

This is the U.S. government's obligation to live up to the responsibilities they agreed to in treaties. Brief answers to some of the most frequently asked questions follow.

Who is a Native American?

Generally, an Indian is a person who is of some degree Indian blood and is recognized as an Indian by a tribe, village, or the U. S. No universally accepted rule for establishing a person's identity as an Indian exists. The criteria for tribal membership differ from one tribe to the next. For its own purposes, the U.S. Census Bureau counts anyone an Indian who declares to be such. By recent counts, there are currently more than two million Native Americans.

What is an Indian Tribe?

Originally, an Indian tribe was a group of people bound together by hlood ties who were socially, politically, and religiously organized; lived together in a defined territory; and spoke a common language or dialect. In the eyes of the U.S. government, a body of people as described above must be officially recognized in order to be considered a trihe.

What does the term "federally recognized" mean?

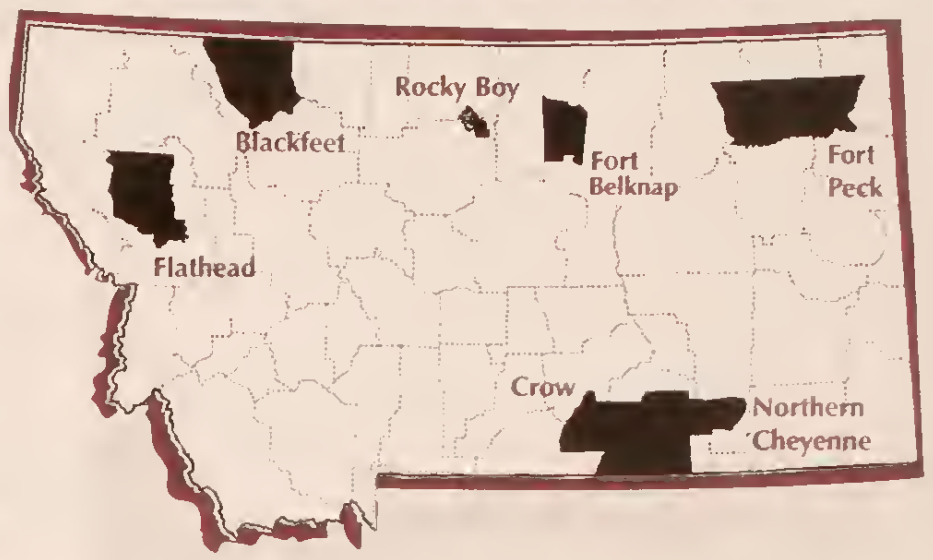
Only tribes who maintain a legal relationship to the U.S. government — through binding treaties, acts of Congress, executive orders, etc. — are officially "recognized" by the federal government. Once "recognized," a tribe has a legal relationship with the U.S. While there are currently more than 550 federally recognized tribes in the U.S., hundreds of tribes are still undergoing the lengthy and tedious process of applying for federal recognition.

What does "tribal sovereignty" mean and why is it so important?

Tribal sovereignty describes the right of federally recognized tribes to govern themselves. It also recognizes the existence of a government-to-government relationship with the United States. Thus, a tribe is not

continued on page 12

Montana Indian Reservations



Tribal resources

Each Montana tribe has a tribal education department, which can provide curricular material and other resources for teachers. In addition, The Montana-Wyoming Indian Education Association (MWIEA) is very active in matters of Indian Education. The tribal education directors, MWIEA board members, and the contact information for each are listed below.

Education Directors

Blackfeet Tribe
• Conrad LaFromboise
Box 850 • Browning, MT 59417
406-338-7539

Chippewa Cree Tribe
• Frances Top Sky
Stone Child College
Box 1082 • Box Elder, MT 59521
406-395-4313 • 406-395-4836 (fax)

Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
• Joyce Silverthorne
Box 278 • Pablo, MT 59855
406-675-2700 ext 1017
406-675-2014 (fax)
tedjoyce@ronan.net

Crow Tribe
• Sharon Peregoy
Box 250 • Crow Agency, MT 59022
406-638-7215 ext. 17
406-638-4453 (fax)

Ft. Belknap
• Arlene Guardipee
Rte 1, Box 66 • Harlem, MT 59526
406-353-2205 ext. 410
406-353-4571 (fax)

Ft. Peck Tribes
• Desiree Lambert
Box 1027 • Poplar, MT 59255
406-768-5136 • 406-768-3556 (fax)
desilamb@yahoo.com

Northern Cheyenne Tribe
• Norma Bixby
Box 307 • Lame Deer, MT 59043
406-477-6602 • 406-477-8150 (fax)
norma@mcn.net

Bureau of Indian Affairs
• Levon French, Line Officer
Education Program Administrator
• Rachel Grant, Education Specialist
Office of Indian Education Programs
316 N. 26th St. • Billings, MT 59101
406-247-7953 • 406-247-7965 (fax)

The MWIEA Board

General Board Members
• *Carol C. Juneau*
Box 55 • Browning, MT 59417
406-338-5689
cjuneau@prodigy.net

• *Norma Bixby (see above)*

• *Daryl Wright*
RR 1, Box 626 • Box Elder, MT 59521
406-395-5223
blackdog@3rivers.net

• *Robert DesRosier*
Box 330 • Browning, MT 59417
rjdrosi@3rivers.net
406-338-7044

• *Barbara Perry*
Box 908 • Poplar, MT 59526
406-768-5431

• *Gloria "Dixie" Hendrickson*
Box 312 • Harlem, MT 59526
dixiehendrickson@yahoo.com
406-383-2846

Urban Indian Representative
• *Mike Jetty*
Box 202501 • Helena, MT 59620
406-444-0794 • mjetty@state.mt.us

Parent Representative
• *Lyle Heavy Runner*
601 27th Ave., NE • Great Falls, MT 59404
406-727-1376

Student Representatives
• *Erica Johnson — College*
Box 716 • Harlem, MT 59524
406-383-4309

• *Jay Dusty Bull — High School*
Box 15 • Browning, MT 59417
406-338-7469
warpny2@yahoo.com

Tribal governments key to Montana

U.S. Senator addresses sovereignty

In August, the Washington state Republican Party voted for a resolution supporting the abolishment of tribal governments. That's a very bad idea and most folks in Montana and across this country know that.

Tribal governments and trihal sovereignty are key elements of our cultural heritage as Montanans. Tribes' unique relationship with the federal government has been affirmed by the Constitution, U.S. Supreme Court decisions, treaties, federal statutes, and executive orders. Federally recognized tribes possess many powers of self-government, including the power to make and enforce civil and criminal law on the reservation, which are made through tribal council, as well as determining the direction of their economic planning and development. A deal is a deal and we need to keep our agreement with Trihes all over the country.

Through sovereignty, Native Americans retain powers of self-governance and selt-determination. I know that each of our tribes and seven Montana reservations have unique histories. And with those histories come a unique set of needs -- only the tribes know what's best for their members. That's why sovereignty is so important. And that's why the notion of abolishing tribal governments is such a had idea.

We are seeing the longest and strongest economic expansion in our nation's history, but poverty has lingered on our reservations. Some reservations have unemployment levels of up to 75 percent, while 29 percent of Native Americans nationwide are homeless. Our Montana reservations do not escape these harsh figures. Tearing down our tribal governments would only serve to make these conditions worse.

I believe that exercising tribal sovereignty is the first step toward economic development. Sovereignty offers a chance for trihes to regain lost heritage while becoming self-sufficient

Tribal Sovereignty, continued on page 12

An all-too-real educational journey

continued from page 1

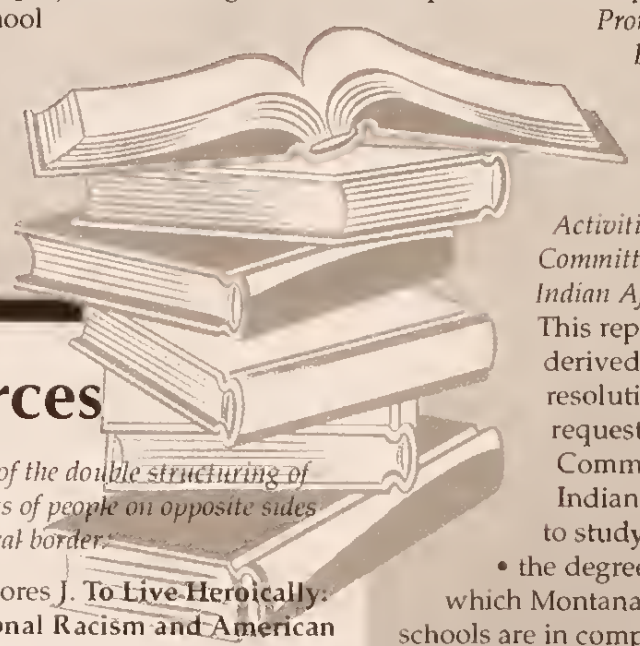
Unfortunately, this educational journey is not an imagined story. It is true for too many of our students – both Indian and non-Indian – as they work their way through Montana's public schools. And, while it is true that teachers cannot teach what they don't know, this doesn't excuse them from including American Indian content in their classroom lessons.

Montana's educators have a constitutional obligation to provide students with an education that includes Montana's Indians. They also have a moral obligation to help create a more equitable society by helping students in their classrooms unlearn pre-conceived notions of Indian people.

Constitutional commitment

Article X, Section 1(2) of the Montana State Constitution reads: "The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity."

Montana's Constitution was ratified in 1972, but little has been done in the intervening 28 years to fulfill this commitment. This specific constitutional language outlining the inclusion of American Indian heritage in educational goals has not been turned into action. Many programs and projects involving the public school system have been implemented in order to improve our educational systems and assure students are receiving a quality education. However, a quality education does not necessarily translate into a fair and equitable education. Indian students still attend schools where they do not see themselves present in classrooms, policies, or the curriculum. Non-Indian students still attend schools where they do not learn about their Indian peers with whom they will continue to live and work.



In 1996, the Legislative Services Division published the report *To Promote a Better Understanding: The 1995-96 Activities of the Committee on Indian Affairs.* This report derived from a resolution requesting the Committee on Indian Affairs to study:

- the degree to which Montana's public schools are in compliance with Article X, Section 1(2) of the Montana Constitution;
- the role of American Indian studies in the overall curriculum of the Montana University System and other institutions of higher learning in the state, with special attention to the teacher education curriculum; and
- the general public's level of knowledge about historical and contemporary American Indian issues.

The report's authors set out to discover why delegates to the Constitutional Convention included this provision in Montana's Constitution. The responses from delegates established two primary reasons: one, to recognize the value of the American Indian culture and traditions and two, to encourage the legislature and public schools to develop appropriate policies and programs to keep that culture alive through the education of both Indians and non-Indians. The language was placed in the education article because delegates believed that it was in the education of the youth that Montana would begin to make positive differences in race relations.

Unfortunately, the 1996 report revealed that despite the Constitution's educational guarantees, many school districts and schools — including those adjacent to Montana's seven reservations — had no policy or information in their school curricula recognizing the cultural heritage of American Indians. Further, it found that the small number of Indian teachers and administrators in public schools resulted in a lack of both role models for Indian students and cultural awareness and sensitivity among non-Indian students.

Constitutional guarantee now incorporated into state statute

In 1999, the Montana State Legislature revisited Article X, Section 1(2) to outline legislative intent and direct the implementation of the constitutional obligation. With the passage of House Bill 528 (HB 528), now codified as 20-1-501 through 503 MCA, the legislature recognized that neither the history of Montana nor the current problems of the state can be adequately understood or addressed unless both Indians and non-Indians understand the history, culture, and contemporary contributions of Montana's Indian people.

The new statute mandates that

- every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner.
- every educational agency and all educational personnel will work cooperatively with Montana tribes (or those tribes in close proximity) when providing instruction, implementing an educational goal, or adopting a rule related to the education of Montana citizens to include information specific to the cultural heritage and contemporary contributions of American Indians, placing particular emphasis on Montana Indian tribal groups and governments.
- educational personnel provide the means by which school personnel will gain an understanding of and appreciation of American Indian people.

Numerous educational organizations and individuals have committed themselves to successful implementation of these provisions. Governor Marc Racicot directed the Montana Board of Education (BPE) to create a committee to address the issue of implementation. After many meetings and public hearings, the committee presented a report and recommendations, which the BPE approved on March 22, 2000. (See page 7). As a result, Montana educational agencies have received specific guidance and direction. For example, the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) has been directed to develop a five year professional development plan, a draft of which is being developed with input from all stakeholders including classroom teachers. Since, clearly, teachers

(Journey, continued on page 7)

Suggested print resources

Books for teachers to read:

- Cleary, Linda Miller and Peacock, Thomas D. **Collected Wisdom: American Indian Education** — *An excellent background on teaching native students that uses both research and voices of teachers.*
- Susag, Dorothea M. **Roots and Branches: A Resource of Native American Literature – Themes, Lessons, and Bibliographies** — *A great resource of Native American Literature that is useful for any grade level of teaching and includes an annotated bibliography and lesson plans.*
- Cajete, Gregory. **Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education** — *A look at education from a Native perspective that describes an indigenous form of education, which could supplement or substitute for the current linear system of education.*
- Swisher, Karen Gayton and Tippeconnic, John W. III. **Next Steps: Research and Practice to Advance Indian Education** — *A series of essays written by Native researchers that address facets of K-12 and post-secondary Native American education programs, including their history, legal aspects, curriculum, access, and achievement.*
- Fedullo, Mick. **Light of the Feather** — *Fedullo, a non-Native, tells of his teaching experiences with various tribal groups and the way he came to drop his own stereotypes for more realistic images of Native people.*
- Slapin, Beverly and Doris Seale, Eds. **Through Indian Eyes: The Native Experience in Books for Children** — *An invaluable resource for teachers that includes essays, poems, reviews, and bibliographies of literature by and about Native people.*
- Foley, Douglas E. **The Heartland Chronicles** — *A multi-layered historical account by a non-Indian anthropologist that incorporates the perspectives of both the white and Mesquaki Indian groups in Iowa, resulting in a complex portrayal of the double structuring of perceptions of people on opposite sides of a cultural border.*
- Huff, Delores J. **To Live Heroically: Institutional Racism and American Indian Education** — *An examination of American Indian education during the last century, which compares tribal, mission, and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools and curricula along with the assumptions each system made about the role that Indians should assume in society. It analyzes the relationship between the rise of institutional racism and the fall of public education in the United States using the history of American Indian education as a model.*

Books for teachers to use in the classroom:

- Welch, James. **Fools Crow** (secondary level) — *Historical fiction that makes students aware of the impact Western settlement had on the Blackfeet people and the ways the Blackfeet survived culturally and personally.*
- Deloria, Ella. **Waterlily** (middle school) — *Historical fiction that allows students to become aware of Dakota culture and people.*
- LaFlesche, Francis. **The Middle Five: Indian Schoolboys of the Omaha Tribe** (middle school) — *A memoir of LaFlesche's early childhood and his years in the mid-1800s at a Mission school. Readers learn what was both positive and negative about the boarding school era.*
- Momaday, N. Scott. **House Made of Dawn** (high school) and **The Way to Rainy Mountain** (middle and high school)
- Silko, Leslie. **Ceremony** (high school)
- Dorris, Michael. **A Yellow Raft in Blue Water** (middle and high school)
- Erdrich, Louise. **Love Medicine** (high school) — *Any of Erdrich's books are good.*

The State Board of Public Education recommends ongoing approach for integrating American Indian History into Montana's schools and classrooms

The passage of HB 528 does not mark the first effort to implement Article X of Montana's Constitution. Other attempts — such as the 1973 Indian Studies Law, the 1990 State Plan to Implement Article X, and the 1997 statute establishing American Indian Heritage Day — were made, but met with limited success.

Board of Public Education establishes committee

In Fall 1999, to spare HB 528 the same fate, the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE) formed a committee to investigate alternatives and put together a concrete, suggested list of approaches to implement HB 528.

In October, BPE members Joyce Silverthorne and Randy Morris were named to the committee, along with Richard Roehm and Deborah Wetsit of the State Board of Regents. After an initial conference call on December 4, 1999, the committee held a hearing on January 24, 2000, to gather public input on their task. Twenty-four individuals, representing various education and Indian organizations, provided testimony.

After weighing that testimony along with the other information they gathered, the committee drafted a series of recommendations and forwarded them to the full BPE for its review and endorsement. On March 22, 2000, the BPE adopted the committee's recommendations, an action that the Montana Indian Education community also applauded.

Funding and oversight key elements for success

During the course of its investigations, the committee identified two primary reasons that prevented the success of previous efforts: the lack of adequate funding for the programs' implementation and the absence of an adequate oversight mechanism. With those key issues in mind, the committee organized its recommendations around five main categories:

I. Agency policy statements and monitoring
II. Educational standards and resources
III. Teacher Training and Professional Development
IV: Recruitment and Retention of American Indian Educators and Students
V: Other

While the committee cautioned that their recommendations were the absolute minimum necessary to implement HB 528, they concluded their report with the statement, "We are optimistic about the ability of these recommendations to effect real change in Montana schools and communities."

Adressing oversight and funding

The committee built an extensive system to monitor and evaluate progress into its recommendations. The call for state education agencies to establish internal checks and balances, as well as an annual review by the BPE.

Adequate funding depends on the availability of funds, not just the willingness of education agencies to dedicate their resources. As a result, the committee suggested that the BPE consider adopting an "overall vision" to guide the various agencies as they approach the legislature for the appropriations needed to implement the recomendations in an effective way. "An active process," they noted, "must be obtained to ensure adequate legislative support." ■

The Montana Board of Education fully supports Article X of our Montana Constitution as well as all provisions of HB 528 and enjoins the Board of Regents, Board of Public Education, and Office of Public Instruction to be actively committed in its educational goals to create understanding about American Indian people and their histories, respect for their respective cultures and world views, and an appreciation for one another.

— resolution passed by the Montana Board of Public Instruction

Board of Public Education Recommendations

I. Agency Policy Statements and Monitoring

Each Montana state educational agency (BPE, OPI, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, and Board of Regents) will do the following:

- develop a policy statement and action plan that expresses its intention to implement HB 528.
- develop a system to periodically monitor and evaluate its progress toward the implementation of HB 528.
- review and revise existing policies and consider new policies that will assist the implementation of HB 528.
- support a public awareness effort to better inform the Montana public about HB 528.
- encourage tribal-state cooperative agreements, as defined within MCA 18-11-101, that will allow for state and local education leadership and tribal governments to work together to determine appropriate and culturally responsive educational goals for citizens of the Montana reservation communities.
- expand professional development and other educational opportunities so that administrators, faculty, staff, and students will have a better understanding of American Indian culture and history. Annual reports identifying these activities will be developed by agency staff and reviewed by the Board of Regents and the Board of Public Education.

II. Educational Standards and Resources

- The BPE should adopt Social Studies Content Standards that specifically address the topics of Montana and American Indian history, culture, and contemporary issues.
- The OPI will provide a model curriculum aligned to Montana's content and performance standards and will develop supportive resources for teaching Montana Indian history, culture, and contemporary issues. The model curriculum and instructional resources will be developed in cooperation with, and approved by, the Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education and will be made available to all Montana public schools. An evaluation tool will also be developed to determine the effectiveness of these resources.
- The OPI and BPE will develop a process to ensure that all content standards reflect the constitutional commitment to American Indian culture, heritage, and contemporary issues.
- The OPE and BPE will develop a process to ensure that the state's accreditation guidelines include the recognition of and commitment to Montana's Constitutional language in Article X.

III. Teacher Training/Professional Development

- The Board of Regents, OPI and BPE will assure that Montana's Teacher Education Program Standards require relevant coursework, such as American Indian Education or its equivalent, that will serve to educate all prospective teachers about teaching American Indian students and enhance their awareness of American Indian culture, language, history and contemporary issues, including tribal sovereignty.
- The Commissioner of Higher Education will appoint a committee chaired by the Deputy Commissioner and including the deans of teacher education programs to develop a Montana University System plan for recruiting more American Indian students into teacher education, placing and retaining them in Montana's schools, and providing continued inservice opportunities. Representatives from the tribal colleges and tribal education departments will be members of the committee.
- The OPI and BPE will continue to work with teacher education programs in the Montana University System to pursue the development of alternative portfolio assessments for teacher certification.
- The Montana University System will continue to support Class 7 certification and make available, as appropriate, research expertise and information resources on language study. The OPI will continue to collaborate with Tribal Colleges and Tribal Governments in providing instructional personnel to teach American Indian languages and culture in our state's educational systems through the Class 7 specialist certification and will seek ongoing institutional support.
- The Office of Public Instruction will provide guidance in the statewide professional development framework to ensure that the state's educational personnel have available appropriate opportunities to learn about American and Montana Indians to better prepare them to provide leadership and instructional support to students in meeting this policy's commitment. Strategies will include, but are not limited to, the following: 1. Developing and implementing a five-year American Indian studies professional development plan statewide for teachers, school boards, administrators and support staff. 2. Developing a professional development program aimed at assisting LEAs to incorporate HB 528.

IV. Recruitment and Retention of American Indian Educators and Students

- The Board of Regents will hire more American Indian faculty, staff, and administrators on the campuses of the Montana University System and the campuses will report data to the Regents every two years.
- The Montana University System will increase enrollments of American Indian students through enhanced recruitment and retention efforts.
- The Board of Regents will annually review and evaluate campus action

(BPE Recommendations, continued on page 12)

A brief history of Indian Education

"Likening Native Americans to the canaries once carried by miners to detect poison gas, Felix F. Cohen, the grandfather of Indian law, characterized Indians as the litmus test for the political health of America as a whole. Cohen reasoned that our treatment of the Indians, even more than our treatment of other minorities, reflects the rise and fall in our democratic faith." — Silverman,1992

American Indians represent less than 1 percent of the total population in the United States and consist of over 300 different tribes each with a unique culture and language (Tippeconnic, 1991). However, in Montana, Indians are the largest minority population comprising about 8 percent of the general population and have seven different reservations representing 12 different tribal nations. When looking at Indian education, it is important to remember the diversity that exists among and within these tribes because what works well for one group may not work well for another.

Five different types of schools serve Indian students: public schools on or off reservations, Tribal contract or grant schools, parochial schools on or off reservations, non-parochial private schools, and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) controlled boarding schools. Nationwide, approximately 90 percent of American Indian students at the K-12 level attend public schools (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997). This also holds true in Montana where the majority of American Indian students attend public schools either on or off the reservation. A small number of American Indian students also attend Montana's two tribally controlled contract schools, which are located on the Flathead and Northern Cheyenne reservations.

Any attempts at reform in these schools must take into account the unique relationship between tribes and other governments (federal, state, local) along with an understanding of the historical events that have helped create the current scene in Indian education.

Schools bear historical burden

"Schools clearly have been the instruments of assimilation in the 20th century, and this is what American Indian people have nearly unanimously rejected." (Noley, 1994)

The education of American Indians has been described as a national tragedy. Studies and reports ranging from the Meriam Report of the 1920s, the Kennedy Report of the 1960s and the recent Indian Nations at Risk Task Force of the 1990s have stressed the need for continued improvements in Indian education. Two key themes that stand out in all of these reports are that we need to validate the culture and language of American Indians by including it throughout the curriculum and that American Indians need to be in control of their own educational systems. These same themes have also arisen in Montana's attempts to improve American Indian education.

In the past, formal education was viewed by Indians as something that was done *to* them. Currently, we are seeing a trend where Indian people are viewing education as something that is done *for* them and *by* them. As a result of increased local tribal control, education in Indian country is now being seen as more of an opportunity rather than an imposition.

From assimilation to self-determination

Federal Indian policy has undergone many changes throughout history. The first Europeans recognized tribes as sovereign nations and entered into treaties for the purposes of trade and land acquisition. This policy set the precedent for how the United States would interact with Indian tribes. It was thought that it would be too costly to take Indian lands by conquest and so began the treaty process (Kicking Bird & Charleston, 1991). Federal Indian policy has gone through six major phases: Removal, Reservation, Allotment, Reorganization, Termination and the current policy of Self-Determination. The primary goal of Indian education during each of the past policies was assimilation of Indians into white American culture. Under the current policy of self-determination, the federal government has tried to eliminate some of the bureaucracy in the administration of Indian programs and give more control to the individual tribes.

Treaties and education

The basis for the federal government playing such a dominant role in the education of Indians stems from the government to government relationship and the subsequent treaties made between the two governments. Not all treaties had a provision for education of Indian people, though. (Tippeconnic, 1991) reports that at least 120 treaties out of the approximately 400 made during the period of 1778-1871 contained provisions for education.

The federal government policy, which lasted up until the latter part of this century, was to Christianize the Indian and assimilate them into white society through the educational process. There was no separation of church and state with regard to the education of American Indians. The only separation that did exist was the idea to separate the Indians from their land and culture. (Kicking Bird & Charleston, 1991)

In the past, formal education was viewed by Indians as something that was done to them. Currently, we are seeing a trend where Indian people are viewing education as something that is done *for* them and *by* them (Warner, 1994). As a result of increased local tribal control, education in Indian country is now being seen as more of an opportunity rather than an imposition. Even though Indian peoples' perceptions of education are changing, current statistics show there is room for much needed improvement. ■

— Mike Jetty, OPI,
School Improvement Specialist

Cultural bias cited in schools

From calling Indians "savages," to rewriting history to fit the non-Indian mold, cultural bias is alive and unwell in the classroom, according to state education official Mike Jetty.

Mr. Jetty, who works for the state Office of Public Instruction, told participants at the recent Montana Indian Education Association conference in Great Falls that all students suffer when their teachers and school administrators aren't properly educated about tribal history and cultural issues.

For example, he said, when people are asked to draw a picture of an American Indian, many still revert to stick drawings of drunks or warriors with fancy headdresses standing next to a tipi.

While Indians have made solid educational advancements over the years, many of those achievements aren't recognized by the public, he said.

"What we want more of is pictures of doctors, lawyers, tribal council members and other professionals," he said.

Mr. Jetty told a workshop group that the main problem is hegemony, or the influences and controls that dominant classes and groups exercise over society's institutions, including schools. In textbooks and other classroom materials, hegemony surfaces when important facts about Indian people are omitted or written only from a non-Indian viewpoint. It also shows when college students are taught to be teachers, as well as when school curricula and other teaching priorities are formulated.

As an example, Mr. Jetty exhibited a textbook used to teach Montana middle school students about the state's history. In one chapter, the book states, "The death of the American Indian culture took less than 30 years after its 9,000 years of building." The chapter also calls the Blackfeet Indians "rogues of the West," and says an 1855 treaty "gave sovereignty and citizenship to the American Indian."

Workshop participants noted that traditional Indian culture is not dead in America, and that the culture and traditions took more than 9,000 years to build. They also said that no one "gave" sovereignty to Indian people, and pointed out that U.S. citizenship was not granted to Indians until 1924. While one Blackfeet man said his tribe might indeed include a few "rogues," the stereotypical characterization of all tribal members was culturally inaccurate, as well as offensive.

Tom Thayer, a Billings author who wrote the chapter, attended the workshop upon Mr. Jetty's invitation. Mr. Thayer said that in retrospect, the entries were wrong. He added, however, that he tried unsuccessfully to get Native Americans to help with the edition, which was published last fall.

"I did my best to have Indians really sit down with me on this," he said. "We didn't get a very good response." Thayer also urged participants to take the time to work on such projects "because otherwise we're just repeating what's already out there."

Julie Cajune, Indian education coordinator for the Ronan-Pablo School District on the Flathead Reservation, said she believes textbook authors have a "great responsibility" to be sure the information they're presenting to students is correct, and that extra care must be taken to ensure that wrong or misleading information doesn't make it into final dratts.

"You have an obligation of scholarship, especially when it's for children," Ms. Cajune said to Mr. Thayer, who apologized for the misrepresentations and promised they wouldn't happen again.

Mr. Jetty noted that legislative approval of House Bill 528, which helps define the state's constitutional mandate to preserve Indian cultural heritage, would put more emphasis on the broader issue of cultural bias. The Montana Board of Public Education recently approved specific guidelines under the bill, which is seen as a major advancement

"House Bill 528, we feel, is very important," Mr. Thayer told the group. "We're not so boisterous as to think we can speak for you."

In his discussion, Mr. Jetty also pointed to other publications used in schools that depict inaccurate situations and details.

(Bias, continued on page 7)

Indian Education offers a means to combat ignorance

The Horse Whisperer was on TV the other night – Robert Redford's film about how to make a broken girl and a broken horse whole and how to unravel a "together" woman. My high school children and their friends abhorred the movie. "When will something happen?" they kept asking. But I was enthralled ... by the beauty of horses and people doing simple things in breath-taking places and by the insights into how much individual wholeness, wellness, "happiness," depends on others — people we struggle to understand and over whom we have little control.

At one point in the movie, Robert Redford tells the broken girl that he had a friend who got broken — a Blackfeet boy who used to help out on the ranch in the summer. A Blackfeet kid down in the Paradise Valley? "What's faky about that?" I asked the kids.

They honestly didn't know. After a while, one kid took a chance: "A white ranch kid wouldn't be good friends with an Indian?"

Which is worse: the fact that these Montana children didn't know that the Blackfeet Reservation is nowhere near the Paradise Valley, or the fact that even in this new millennium, they expect and accept, even if they don't espouse, the patterns of the past?

Obviously, the second is worse, but it derives from the first. Ignorance is *not* bliss. Ignorance always has and always will beget fear, estrangement, and prejudice. And the sad fact is that, as we enter our third century of cohabiting the same beautiful place, those of us who entered the scene late in the game are still ignorant of Montana's first citizens. As a whole, we do not know one tribe or reservation from the other or one massacre from the next (and some not at all). We have never had an "Indian friend." A stone's throw away from reality, we inhabit the fetid, dark world of stereotype.

Ignorance is *not* bliss. Ignorance always has and will beget fear, estrangement, and prejudice....But if ignorance is the root of the problem — and it is — then education is the beginning of the answer. The divide between Native American and majority cultures in Montana has gone on too long. It's time to get it together."

— Mary Sheehy Moe

As a result, too many of us are broken. Some are split by the deep divides of prejudice. Some are fragmented within, isolated by an "otherness" that makes them susceptible to chemical dependency, broken relationships, suicide, poverty, and the death penalty. But the real tragedy of the ignorance that we share as a culture is that we can't get it together-- as people or as a people.

I don't always understand the humor of my Indian colleagues. I don't always know when I'm stepping on their toes. I don't always feel welcome at their gatherings – and, worse, I know that sometimes they don't feel welcome at mine. This ignorance and otherness that growing up in Montana produces are not bliss. Quite the opposite. We are all deprived – cut off from those simple exchanges of a people who understand and enjoy each other. Those exchanges produce the good times and the good will that elevate life from something merely livable to something deeply lovable. And until we have those exchanges, we will never be whole and healthy as a people.

Last fall, the Montana Board of Education decided to take meaningful action to change this state of affairs. They created a committee to investigate ways that education in Montana could reflect our constitutional commitment to honor and preserve Montana's Native American cultures. That committee made a series of recommendations to meet that constitutional imperative by changing policies, educational standards, resources, and teacher training and professional development. No doubt Montana educators will wince and whine about "being forced" to implement some of them. And, yes, the argument can be made that by "preserving" Montana's Native American cultures we preserve the separation between Native Americans and the rest of us.

But if ignorance is the root of the problem – and it is – then education is the beginning of the answer. The divide between Native American and majority cultures in Montana has gone on too long. It's time to get it together. At MSU–Great Falls Campus, where I now serve as chief academic officer, we are committed to pursuing the committee's recommendations. We are particularly interested in partnering with public schools to elevate awareness, understanding, and appreciation of our Native American students, employees, and neighbors. I encourage you to make the same commitment. Let's make Montana whole at last. ■

— Mary Sheehy Moe, Associate Dean
MSU–Great Falls College of Technology
Montana Teacher of the Year, 1987

Suggested online resources

The following Web sites provide a wide variety of good material on issues relating to Indian education, ranging from academic articles, lesson plans, glossaries, bibliographics, historical facts, information about ongoing projects, and current news. Most are updated on a regular basis, and all are worth checking out.

- www.nativechild.com/articl.html
- nmnhwww.si.edu/anthro/outreach/Indbibl/bibliogr.html
- www.nativeweb.org/resources/education/
- www.ael.org/eric/indians.htm
- www.indianz.com
- www.oyate.org/main.html
- www.abanet.org/journal/03ISOV.html
- staff.washington.edu/~pshafer/rep~1.htm
- www.niea.org
- www.narf.org
- www.skc.edu/ipednet/index.html
- www.night.net/thanksgiving/lesson-plan.html

Journey

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will make the biggest difference in this effort. The BPE also directed that OPI create curriculum guides, which are aligned to the state's academic standards, to help teachers integrate American Indian content into their classroom lessons.

The passage of HB 528 has generated an impetus to move forward toward an equitable education for all students. It is now up to state educational agencies and local districts to take advantage of this new law to ensure that Montana's non-Indian students are given the opportunity to learn about the rich heritage of their neighbors and peers and that Indian students are able to locate themselves within their schools.

Education in Montana should be about the 4 R's: Reading, 'Riting, 'Rithmetic, and Racial Equality.

Successful implementation of Article X and HB 528 depends upon the entire educational community, not just schools with high populations of American Indians. The Montana Tribal nations and tribal colleges must also assume a more proactive role in assisting with implementation efforts. Although it will require hard work coupled with a well-planned and collaborative effort, equality and fairness can be achieved as part of a quality education. We do not want to revisit this issue in another 28 years wondering where we went wrong. It is time to take bold steps forward to support and finally institutionalize our constitutional and moral obligation to Indian Education, thus realizing the four R's of education: Reading, 'Riting, 'Rithmetic, and Racial Equality. ■

— Denise Juneau, OPI, Indian Education Specialist

Bias

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In "My Heart Is on the Ground," a book portrayed as a boarding school diary, "Chief Sitting Bull" is described at the leader of the Cheyenne Nation, and non-Indians allegedly "gave" the Black Hills to the Lakota. The book, among other errors, also said that Lakota people grew corn and wheat in 1880, and that wealth among Plains Indians was measured by the number of poles in their tipis.

Another book, "Indian in the Cupboard," has the main character, "Little Bear," speaking in broken language and non-Indians calling native people "Injuns" who are "ornery," "savage" and "dirty."

"What sort of image does that make about Indians' intelligence?" Mr. Jetty asked. ■

— Ron Seldon, Journalist with the *Billings Outpost*

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Making education more fair

Reform efforts can redress bias against low income and minority students and improve Montana's economy

According to the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, 1991, four major factors would, if addressed, improve the education of American Indian students. They are:

- ✔the incorporation of language and culture;
- ✔the provision of community and parental involvement;
- ✔instruction that is appropriate for Indian students; and
- ✔testing that is appropriate for Indian students.

The work on standards-based reform and assessment that currently commands attention in our public education system at national, state, and local levels offers great potential for redressing biases in the system that adversely affect minority and low-income students.

In Montana, American Indian students comprise a large portion of the population that could be better served. The bottom line, though, is that *all* of Montana's students would benefit from the addition of Indian studies to school curriculums and more equitable measures into the assessment of student learning.

And, so would Montana's economy. The current concentration on educational reform is not solely for education's sake; economic concerns served as the initial catalyst. In order for Montana to be competitive in the U.S. and world economies, students need to have the necessary skills to perform in the workplace and compete successfully with students from other states and countries. ■

Sandra J. Fox is an Ogala Lakota who has worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) as a teacher, education specialist, and team leader.

Drawing on the experience and expertise she has gained working with American Indian students in the BIA, she strongly believes that elements of the current educational reform sweeping across the United States can, if implemented, help redress age-old biases and allow schools and teachers to provide American Indian students with a better education.

Content Standards – making learning relevant for *all* students

Fox believes that, theoretically at least, "The development of content standards has provided the opportunity to fuse Indian content into the base curricula of schools, a longtime goal for Indian education."

If Indian language and culture were incorporated into the classroom, it would address two issues of concern that directly affect Indian students. One, it would help make learning more *relevant* for Indian students sitting in a classroom. Two, it would inculcate a sense of respect for Indian culture, history, and contributions on the part of both Indian and non-Indian students.

In Montana, Indian students stand to gain an increased sense of self-worth and belonging and all students stand to gain a richer understanding of the states people and their past, present, and future.

But, how can an already full curriculum be expanded, no matter what the benefits? This is a concern teachers express about adding history, culture and tribal sovereignty to the existing school day. "How do we add water to a glass that is already full?" sums up the issue.

Teachers need to view American Indian studies as an interdisciplinary field that draws from history, law, sociology, anthropology, ecnomics, art, literature, music, science, and mathematics to study about indigenous people. The answer is not to create new classes but to take advantage of the many opportunities to integrate Indian content into as many current courses as possible. And, not just at Thanksgiving, Columbus Day, or when studying about Lewis and Clark.

Language and LEP

Reforming the content standards also offers an opportunity to rectify another area of concern and inequality: language and limited English proficiency (LEP).

The most recent research on teaching and learning emphasizes the language arts "as the keys to unlocking all other learning," says Fox. Referring to the 1999 U.S. Department of Education report *Start Early, Finish Strong*, Fox notes that "children from high poverty areas are coming to school with vocabularies of approximately 3,000 words compared to their counterparts from affluent homes who come with 20,000 word vocabularies."

"Many Indian children," she continues, "are LEP, even if they don't speak their native languages." Recognizing this fact and making adjustments in content standards as well as local curricula and programs will help students increase their proficiency in the English language. Increased proficiency will, in turn, allow students to learn more, perform better on tests, and perhaps encourage them to stay in school longer.

In Montana, Indian students stand to gain an increased sense of self-worth and belonging and all students stand to gain a richer understanding of the states people and their past, present, and future.

An appeal for performance-based assessment

Accompanying standards reform is a review of the "traditional" standardized, norm-referenced mode of assessment. This review has clarified the fundamental inequities inherent in the old mode. In her article "Student Assessment in Indian Education *or* What is a Roach?"published in *Next Steps: Research and Practice to Advance Indian Education* by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools in 1999, Fox states that "successful performance on standardized tests correlates with socio-economic status and the provision of mainstream experiences."

In addition, the ability of standardized tests to assess students' comprehension of more difficult content is being increasingly questioned. Fox summarizes Peter Sachs' 1997 research by listing three major shortcomings of current assessment practices.

1. Standardized tests are often unreliable indicators of what students know or how well they will do in subsequent educational experiences.
2. Standardized test scores tend to correlate highly with the income and education of students' parents, i.e. socioeconomic class.
3. Standardized tests can reward superficial learning. They are designed to test information that can be put into multiple choice questions for the ease of scoring. They cannot test active, critical thinking skills.

Fox notes, "Schools that continue to use standardized tests are working in opposition to the attempt to teach problem-solving and other

(Continued on next page)

GEAR UP Program helps students prepare for college

Created from the Higher Education Act of 1998, GEAR UP, or Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, is predicated upon the belief and proven fact that *all* students can achieve at high academic levels and go on to succeed in college if they receive early college awareness information, rigorous academic instruction, and sustained support.

Montana was one of 21 states be awarded a five-year, competitive matching state grant through the U.S. Department of Education to implement a statewide GEAR-UP Program.

Program administration

Since the program's main goal is to provide Montana students with the skills, support and encouragement they need to enroll and succeed in college, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) functions as GEAR-UP's lead agency. The actual organizational structure, however, includes the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and local school-community coordinators, tutors, and mentors.

GEAR UP Vision and Objectives

The program's 11 primary objec-

(GEAR UP, continued on page 12)

Making education more fair

Continued from page 8

thinking skills. Standardized tests drive instruction in undesirable directions and inhibit meaningful educational reform." In fact, she concludes that "the norm-referencing and bell curve used for standardized testing reinforce the view that instruction will not be effective for certain students." This encourages low expectations.

This scathing indictment of standardized tests is taking hold at the national level. In 1997, Congress included assessment requirements in Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act (Title I) that call for "the use of multiple measures and performance-based methods in contrast to reliance on one standardized, norm reference test."

Performance-based or authentic assessment

Fox and many other educators are convinced that performance-based assessment, when done correctly, will improve the educational experiences of non-Indian students as well as Indian students because this method of assessment is ongoing and integral to instruction. In fact, it also drives the instructional process.

The U.S. Office of Educational Research and Improvement published guidelines in *Assessment of Student Performance*. There, it's explained that, "in performance assessment, students construct, rather than select, responses. Students may write, give a speech, solve a problem, or do a project to show what they know. Teachers observe student behavior on those tasks and systematically record information about the student's learning gained from the observation. Teachers are able to see patterns in students' learning and thinking. This method of assessment is ongoing, built as part of the instructional process. It also drives the instructional process."

As a result, assessment and instruction are merged – improving both.

In addition, the assessment is not completed in a single day; rather, many performances are taken into account before determinations are made about a student's achievement.

Performance-based assessment is also referred to as "authentic assessment," because it promotes the demonstration of applied knowledge and the performance of tasks of the real world. Fox enumerates some of the positive effects of this mode of assessment:

- allowing students to be involved in assessing their own progress,
- allowing parents to be involved in assessing their children and interacting with teachers (providing information about their child's application of knowledge at home, and
- shedding light on students' understanding of a problem, involvement with the problem, approach to solving the problem, and their ability to express themselves.

The Indian way is not to judge children's learning by telling them that they are right or wrong. Our way is to give validation because we base learning on values, a way of life – to give hope. Our Indian children have been beaten down by the system before they are given a chance to learn because of testing."

— Gloria Grant, Chinle AZ

Peformance-based assessment and Indian students

In addition to the positives listed above, performance-based assessment offers Indian students other advantages. One of these is a sense of continuity (currently lacking) between their native culture and the environment they encounter at school.

As Fox notes, "American Indian people have historically used performance-based assessment to evaluate the skills and abilities of the young and to determine their readiness for taking on various duties in the tribe." As examples, she refers to pow wow dance competitions, sports competitions, and art contests.

Standardized tests, on the other hand, can themselves contribute to Indian students' lack of success. Fox quotes Gloria Grant of the Chinle, AZ, Unified School District.

"The Indian way is not to judge children's learning by telling them that they are right or wrong. Our way is to give validation because we base learning on values, a way of life – to give hope. Our Indian children have been beaten down by the system before they are given a chance to learn because of testing."

Performance-based assessment "examines student performance on specific tasks that are important for life." So, students can appreciate the relevance of both the assessment practices and the learning they measure. This relevancy gains increased momentum, because of the close connection between assessment and instruction that peformance-based assessment requires. An added bonus of the new mode of assessment is that it is more flexible, and more individualized. It can, for example, take place in a child's native language.

Reform requires activism and planning

Of course, taking advantage of the opportunities, which the current climate of reform offers, requires activism and planning.

People who can help with thisNationwide, the Indian input into the development of content standards has varied widely. In North Dakota and Minnesota, tribal groups and Indian educators were an integral part of the process. In other states, Indian people were not consulted at all.

It also requires vigilance and participation. As Fox states, "Indian involvement in the total standards process is vital!" ■

High dropout rates show Indian students need alternatives to the traditional educational system

A review of school enrollment reports, which K-12 schools submit to the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), reveals that too many Indian students who start high school in Montana do not graduate.

Drop-out rate

Figures collected from school years 1992-93 through 1995-96 show that, statewide, 48 percent more Indian students started ninth grade than actually graduated four years later. This compares to a 19 percent drop for white students in the state during the same time period.

Many Indian students graduate from Montana high schools and continue their education, and we are very proud of these successes. At the same time, however, we cannot be tolerant of losing over 40 percent of our Indian students in high school.

Long-term implications somber

It is unacceptable to have only 52 percent of our Indian students graduating. The long-term implications for our communities should be a concern to all. Educators, parents, tribal leaders, politicians, businesses, and others need to take action and seek solutions to this disturbing trend.

I attended the Economic Summit held in Great Falls, which received an overwhelmingly positive response from Montanans. One of the Summit's recommendations was to strengthen the economic conditions on our reservations. Positive economic growth is not possible with only 52 percent of our Indian students graduating from high school. Those who drop out — or are pushed out — of schools have little chance of finding a welcoming economic place in Montana society.

> **"Positive economic growth is not possible with only 52 percent of our Indian students graduating from high school."**
>
> **— Carol Juneau**

Personal power key to success

Our educational systems are complex organizations with many rules and policies. Often, those rules and policies are too inflexible to address the issues that make it difficult for many Indian students to operate within the parameters set by these institutions.

Schools are established and organized with the expectation that all students will participate equally in the academic and extra-curricular programs they offer. But, the systems are not equal. Many Indian students — as well as their parents or guardians — lack the "personal power" they need to be an equal participant. By personal power I mean having a sense of control over and ownership of their choices and opportunities.

If we examine students who are successful, we see individuals and families who had the personal power of economic stability, athletic participation, or community stature. This, in turn, allowed them the freedom to interact with teachers and other students with the comfort that comes from knowing that they "fit in" and that they had a sense of control over their environment.

Without this personal power to cope with the complexities of the educational systems they encounter, students find the barriers insurmountable. It becomes too overwhelming to try to stay in a place that is not accepting, so they leave. And, parents, who might otherwise be able to help their children, feel it best to stay away from a place over which they have no control.

> **"The public school system must address the high exodus of Indian students from our schools. It is imperative that the dropout rate decrease if we are to have an economically viable society for all Montanans."**
>
> **— Carol Juneau**

A possible solution

One suggestion, which may provide an immediate solution, would be to offer in-school high school equivalency programs in conjunction with traditional high school. This approach would give our high schools the resources to offer students an alternative to the four-year program, which we know is not working for many. Waiting until students drop out or are pushed out of school before offering them an alternative through poorly funded GED programs makes no sense. Especially since a GED allows students the same opportunities for employment and college as a high school diploma.

The importance of receiving a quality education is important to all people, including American Indian people. The public school system must address the high exodus of Indian students from our schools. It is imperative that the dropout rate decrease if we are to have an economically viable society for all Montanans. ■

— Carol Juneau, Montana Representative from HD 85–Browning

Students in Great Falls Public Schools' Title IX Program experience a piece of Montana Indian culture by learning about drumming.

Diversity Questions

for school and classroom

Both research and common sense indicate that the environment, in which students learn, asserts great influence over what they actually learn. And, often it is the unspoken — rules, visuals, and available materials — that communicate the strongest message.

Here are a list of questions educators can ask to ascertain whether (or not) their school or classroom offers *all* their students a learning environment that is both welcoming and culturally enriching.

School Level:

- ✔ Does the school philosophy explicitly address Indian education?
- ✔ Do visuals in the hall or office reflect Indian culture in a nonstereotypical manner?
- ✔ Is there a plan to ensure that curriculum and classroom materials schoolwide reflect Indian education?
- ✔ Does the plan for selecting materials include Indian education criteria?
- ✔ Do library materials reflect cultural and language diversity in a nonstereotypic manner?
- ✔ Are resources, in-service, and planning time made available to help the staff work with multicultural and bilingual education?
- ✔ Does the school support and encourage bilingualism and Indian education for all students?
- ✔ Do discipline policies and procedures treat all students and student groups equally and equitably?
- ✔ Is there a plan to involve all parents, especially those who rarely participate?
- ✔ Do extracurricular activities provide for the diverse interests, cultural backgrounds, and physical capabilities of students?

Classroom Level:

- ✔ Do visuals reflect Indian language and culture in your classroom?
- ✔ Does your regular instructional materials include references to Indians in a nonstereotypical manner?
- ✔ Do your daily lessons reflect Indian language and culture?
- ✔ Other than on special occasions, do you use local resource people in your classroom?
- ✔ Do you use different strategies to teach students with different learning styles and skill levels?
- ✔ Do your teaching strategies promote active learning and critical thinking?
- ✔ Do you set and maintain high expectations for your students?
- ✔ Do your grading and grouping practices encourage and reward success for all students equally?
- ✔ Do you try to actively communicate with parents?

— adapted by Denise Juneau and Mike Jetty, OPI

GEAR UP

(Continued from page 9)

tives also serve as a vision for the future. Those objectives are as follows:

- Promoting equal access to education and educational excellence through concerted partnership efforts on behalf of low income students.
- Helping ensure that *all* students have access to rigorous courses that prepare them for college.
- Providing information early to students and parents about college options, required courses, and financial aid.
- Helping schools provide their students with a solid academic foundation for college through challenging courses, well-prepared teachers, and modern learning tools.
- Promoting, as needed, reforms and improvements in the school curriculum as well as in teaching and learning methods.
- Promoting strategies and activities for increased parent involvement in preparing students for college.
- Providing intensive, individualized and coordinated support to students that includes mentoring, counseling, and tutoring.
- Providing ongoing staff training and professional development opportunities to help teachers raise expectations for all students.
- Establishing strong partnerships that involve a long-term commitment and meaningful role for each partner in improving students' preparation for college.
- Building local and state efforts and encouraging local and state investment to sustain GEAR UP activities and services beyond the five-year grant.
- Designing comprehensive projects informed by research on effective practices that include careful evaluations to enable continuos improvement and guide project replication.

For more information on GEAR UP, contact Peggy Azure, OPI's GEAR UP coordinator (pazure@state.mt.us; 444-7490). ■

Frequently asked questions

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a ward of the government, but an independent nation with the right to form its own government, adjudicate legal cases and levy taxes within its borders, establish its membership, and decide its own future fate. The U.S. government has a trust responsibility to protect tribal lands, assets, resources and treaty rights.

What is a reservation?

An Indian reservation is a landbase that a tribe reserved for itself when it relinquished its other land areas to the U.S. through treaties. More recently, Congressional acts, executive orders and administrative acts have created reservations. Some reservations, today, have non-Indian residents and land owners.

Are Indians U.S. citizens?

All Indians received citizenship in 1924. Before then, only individuals who were members of federally recognized tribes and "naturalized" had the rights of a U.S. citizen. Presently, all Indians born within the territorial limits of the U.S. are legal citizens.

Native Americans have had the privilege of voting in national elections since 1924. Until recently, however, some states prohibited Native Americans from voting in local elections; for example, New Mexico did not extend the vote to Native Americans until 1962. Most Indians, of course, also are members of their respective sovereign tribes.

Are Native Americans exempt from military service?

Native Americans, despite tribal sovereignty, have the same obligations for military service as all other U.S. citizens.

Do Indians pay taxes?

All Indians are subject to federal income taxes. As sovereign entities, tribal governments have the power to levy taxes on reservation lands. As a result, Indians and non-Indians may or may not pay sales taxes on goods and services purchased on the reservation, depending on the tribe. However, whenever a member of an Indian tribe conducts business off the reservation, that person, like everyone else, pays both state and local taxes. State income taxes are not paid on reservation or trust lands.

Do Native Americans receive any special rights or benefits from the U.S. government?

Contrary to popular belief, Indians do not receive payments from the federal government just because they have Indian blood. Funds distributed may represent mineral lease income on property held in trust by the U.S. or compensation for lands taken in connection with governmental projects. Some Indian tribes receive benefits in fulfillment of treaty obligations or for the extraction of tribal natural resources — a percentage of which may be distributed as per capita among the tribes' membership.

What does all this mean?

Tribes deserve to be sovereign entities imbued with the authority of self-determination on their own land. For a healthy government-to-government relationship to exist, the U.S. government must respect the binding agreements spelled out in its own treaties. All Native Americans should demand nothing less than what the U.S. government has promised them. ■

— This information is from the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) Web site at www.narf.org and reprinted

Tribal sovereignty

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and determining their own future. Sovereignty is the key to bringing more good-paying jobs to the reservation.

In addition, political participation in Indian Country is on the rise. Indians in Montana have benefitted from economic and social changes brought about by technology and education. Tribal members increasingly are exercising their sovereign voice to raise the standard of living on our reservations.

I recognize their efforts and encourage them to continue their quest to better the lives of their people. And I will continue hand in hand to help them along the way.

In Montana, we understand how important tribal governments are to our heritage, to our way of life, and to our legacy as Montanans. I will continue to fight for Tribal Sovereignty and the government-to-government relationships that our Constitution assures and Montanans continue to support. ■

— U.S. Senator Max Baucus

Editor's Note: This column was published in a number of Montana's daily newspapers. It is reprinted here with the permission of Senator Baucus' office.

Board of Public Education Recommendations

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plans for diversity and ensure that sufficient training opportunities are available consistent with the goals of HB 528.
- The BPE will remain committed to the continuation of the American Indian fee waiver and will support a statutory appropriation for non-beneficiary students at the tribal colleges.
- The BPE will support strategies to promote recruitment and retention of American Indian teachers in Montana's public schools to increase the percentage of American Indian teachers to a level consistent with the percentage of American Indian students in Montana schools. Specific strategies will include, but are not limited to: 1. Creating a scholarship/loan forgiveness program for future American Indian educators; and 2. Undertaking collective efforts to support and attain state and federal programs and grants that encourage American Indian teacher training.

V. Other
- The OPI will research, plan, monitor, evaluate and budget for programs and services designed to reduce the disparity of educational achievement that currently exists in Montana's educational system for its American Indian students.
- The OPI will develop a communication mechanism betweenitself and Tribal Education Departments.
- The Board of Regents will develop a communication mechanism between the Board of Regents, Montana's Indian tribes, and tribal colleges.
- The OPI and Board of Regents will continue to advocate for American Indian education and secure adequate funding for the activities of the Indian Education Department and the Office of American Indian/Minority Achievement, respectively.
- The OPI will continue to include input from Montana Indian educators in the development and implementation of statewide assessment activities.
- The OPI will provide adequate supportive resources within its organizational structure to ensure that this commitment will be implemented, including both within and without the office, a data management system and reporting mechanism that will serve as a measurement of accountability to this policy.
- The OPI, BPE, and Board of Regents will encourage that all school districts and university units within Montana observe American Indian Week each September. ■

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